The Claims Defining the Invention are as Follows

1.   A system for establishing or specifying the online status of a user forming
     part of an instant messaging system comprising a plurality of clients having
     IM client applications of the same or different types and an IM server
5   selectively connected to each of said clients via a computer network, the
     system comprising:

     a user database for storing an activity status for each user of the IM system
     with respect to the IM server, said activity status including: (i) a time variable
10   signifying the time of or time since the last prescribed involvement of the
     user with said IM server; and (ii) a probability variable signifying the
     likelihood of the user still being online;

     monitoring means to continuously monitor user activity with said IM server
15   and to continuously update the activity status of users stored on said
     database involved with said activity; and

     checking means to check the activity status of each user stored on said
     database and adjust said probability variable in a prescribed manner having
20   regard to said time variable.

2.   A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said client types include clients
     connected to the computer network via:

25   (i)   a PC-based instant messaging client application program;

     (ii)   a GSM device on a GSM network;

     (iii) an internet browser-based client application; or

     (iv)   an email-based client application.

30 3.   A system as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein said prescribed involvement
     with said IM server includes:

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(i)   one client sending a message to another;

(ii)   one client successfully receiving a message sent from another;

(iii) one checking the activity status of another user(s); and

5   (iv) other activities, involving the IM server system, that can be detected by computer and electronic methods.

4.   A system as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein said computer network is the internet and/or any direct electronic link.

5.   A system as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein said client
10   types connected to the computer network via the GSM network have SMS capability and are initially connected to the computer network via an SMSC server to control and manage said SMS therebetween, said SMSC server and said IM server being directly interconnected via said computer network, and wherein said SMSC server provides an indication to said monitoring
15   means of the activity of targeted recipient GSM clients in response to messages sent to the SMSC server for delivery thereto by said IM server.

6.   A method for establishing or specifying the online status of a user forming part of an instant messaging system comprising a plurality of clients having
20   IM applications of the same or different types, selectively interconnected to an IM server by way of a computer network, the method comprising the following steps:

storing an activity status for each user of the IM system with respect to the
25   IM server, said activity status including: (i) a time variable signifying the time of or time since the last prescribed involvement of the user with said IM server; and (ii) a probability variable signifying the likelihood of the user still being online;

30   continuously monitoring user activity with said IM server;

continuously updating the stored activity status of users involved with said activity;

5   checking the stored activity status of each user; and

adjusting said probability variable in a prescribed manner having regard to said time variable.

7.   A system for establishing or specifying the online status of a user forming

10   part of an instant messaging system substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings as appropriate.

8.   A method for establishing or specifying the online status of a user forming part of an instant messaging system substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings as appropriate.

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